U-PASS: 17 Years of Success

Almost 80% of the campus population—about 52,000 people—commute to campus using transportation that’s greener than driving alone.

- Drive Alone 21% 14,000 people per day
- Carpool/Vanpool 5% 3,000 people per day
- Public Transit 39% 26,000 people per day
- Bicycle 8% 5,000 people per day
- Walk 25% 17,000 people per day
- Other 2% 1,000 people per day

One third chooses biking or walking—emissions-free commute options.
Creating Value for UW Commuters

In 2008, students, staff, and faculty collectively saved almost $16 million by paying for transit with U-PASS. That is $16 million that was available to help students pay for tuition and books, staff and faculty to pay a little more per month to live closer to work, and for all users to invest in the local economy.

Creating Value for the Institution

Since the 1983 agreement between the City of Seattle and the University of Washington, the University’s ability to grow has been limited by its ability to stay within specific thresholds for daily traffic volumes and parking capacity on campus. As a direct result of the U-PASS program, the University has been able to replace former parking lots with new academic and research facilities covering over 350,000 square feet. In today’s dollars, the cost of that land represents a value of over $71 million. Today the University is able to accommodate 66,000 students, faculty, and staff—plus visitors and patients—with a campus parking supply of 11,590, well below the stall limit of 12,300.

If students, staff, and faculty continued to drive alone to campus at the rates they did before the introduction of the U-PASS program, more than 22,560 people would be attempting to park on campus and in the surrounding neighborhoods each day. The cost of increasing the number of parking stalls on campus from the current amount to the maximum allowed capacity would be approximately $28 million, and this supply would meet little more than half of the daily demand.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

U-PASS helps the University in our efforts to implement the President’s Climate Commitment. Before the creation of the U-PASS, the University’s transportation demand management efforts had already helped shift commuters away from the most polluting transportation options. U-PASS is responsible for reducing the CO₂ emissions of University commuters by a further 7,840 metric tons of CO₂ per year. One third of the commute trips to campus are people powered—providing campus access with zero CO₂ emissions.

Improving Neighborhood Relations

“Creation of the U-PASS program has improved relations between the University and the City tenfold. Community members are impressed by our efforts to get people out of their cars and to commute instead by bus, bike, and on foot.”
- Theresa Doherty, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs

“Vital to the general success of the University Area’s transportation system has been the ‘U-Pass’ program. . . . The continued success and influence of the U-PASS program will be critical to offering real transportation choice and effective congestion management in the University Area well into the future.”
- City of Seattle University Area Transportation Action Strategy

U-PASS has had a tangible impact on the traffic volumes in the University District and on campus. Despite a 28% increase in the campus population since the creation of U-PASS, there were fewer vehicle trips to campus per day in 2007 than in any of the previous 25 years.

Serving as a Model

The University of Washington’s U-PASS program is one of the oldest and most successful transportation demand management programs in the nation. Transportation Services is frequently asked to present on the U-PASS program at conferences and to provide expert advice to other universities. UW’s U-PASS is widely regarded as an industry leader.

“The UW U-PASS program is at the forefront of transportation demand management strategies in use by universities across the country. I use the UW U-PASS program as a model to teach other universities how to mitigate parking demand.”
- Brian Shaw, President of the Association for Commuter Transportation and University of Chicago Director of Campus Transportation & Parking Facilities Services

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